STATEMENT OF
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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Before the
SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND NUCLEAR SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE
SENATE COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE SUBCOMMITTEE
U.S. SENATE

Hearing on
Freight Transportation

September 9, 2002

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today the views of the Arizona Department of Transportation Board regarding the Hoover Dam Bypass Project and the impact on commercial trucking.

For the record, my name is Katie Dusenberry, and I am the Chairman of the Arizona Department of Transportation Board. The Board is responsible for a variety of transportation activities prescribed by Arizona statute.

Introduction

Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant growth in freight due to improvements in manufacturing processes and new technologies. This growth, while important for economic vitality, stresses our trade gateways and corridors. U.S. DOT has estimated that freight traffic will double over the next 20 years making the condition of these trade corridors even more critical. Our economic growth and ability to maintain a competitive edge in international markets depends on the condition and

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capacity of these trade corridors to accommodate the ever increasing freight traffic.

History

U.S. Highway 93 is part of the major transportation network in the western United States and is the primary, direct north-south connecting highway linking two major metropolitan cities, Phoenix, Arizona and Las Vegas, Nevada, in two of the fastest growing states in the United States. U.S. 93 is one of the highway segments that makes up the route from Mexico City, Mexico to Edmonton, Canada known as the CANAMEX Corridor. This corridor was formally designated as a high-priority trade corridor by the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995. The Corridor runs from Mexico City to I-19 in Nogales to Tucson, I-10 from Tucson to Phoenix, US 93 in the vicinity of Phoenix to the Nevada Border, US 93 from Arizona to Las Vegas and I-15 from Las Vegas through Montana to Edmonton, Canada.

The CANAMEX Corridor represents an opportunity for economic development that facilitates trade and encourages economic growth throughout the region. The interest in developing this Corridor is to facilitate transportation distribution, commerce and tourism. A preliminary study of the potential positive economic impact if the CANAMEX Corridor is fully developed suggests over a 30 year period:

- Economic development (value added) of $1.2 billion
- Economic efficiencies of $509 million
- Approximately 1,900 new permanent jobs

These figures reflect completion of a number of projects within the Corridor including the

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Hoover Dam Bypass project.

Prior to the terrorist attacks on 9/11/01, the direct route for all traffic, including commercial trucks, to reach either Arizona or Nevada was a road across the top of Hoover Dam consisting of two lanes of traffic, one in each direction. The approach from Arizona to the Hoover Dam consists of approximately 1.2 miles of roadway and from Nevada, 2.2 miles of roadway. On the approach to Hoover Dam from both Arizona and Nevada, steep grades, hairpin turns, and inadequate sight distance are encountered by freight and passenger traffic reducing speeds to between 8 to 18 MPH. Commercial trucks are often too large to pass each other on the extreme hairpin curves and must come to a complete stop. On both the Arizona and Nevada approaches, the grades are greater than 6%. The existing 6.3 miles north and south of the Dam requires an average of 16.5 minutes to cross due to the nature of the road and the traffic on the Dam itself. To remedy the inadequacy of this route, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in cooperation with the States of Arizona and Nevada and other affected federal and state agencies has taken a leadership role in developing plans to construct a new bridge to cross the Colorado River in the vicinity of Hoover Dam. This bridge is entirely on federal property and therefore should be largely a federal financial responsibility.

Since 9/11/01, the road across the Hoover Dam has been closed to commercial trucking and over 2,100 trucks per day are now detoured to other highways. Commercial truck traffic must now route through Laughlin, an additional 23 miles or I-40 an additional 70 miles, adding dozens of travel miles to each trip. This creates a negative financial impact of $30 million per year,

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based on only the additional mileage, which is ultimately passed on to the consumer. The detours currently being used by commercial trucks are not designed to handle this traffic volume and weight. The Hoover Dam crossing is the only major highway in the nation with ongoing restrictions as a result of the terrorist attack.

Purpose of Project

The purpose of the project, a joint effort among Arizona, Nevada and the federal government is to significantly reduce traffic on the road atop the Hoover Dam and will accomplish the following objectives:

- Remove a major bottleneck to interstate and international commerce and travel by reducing traffic congestion and accidents in this segment of the major commercial route.
- Separate tourist and commercial traffic to reduce congestion.
- Improve efficiency and reduce cost to the shippers of freight by reducing travel time.
- Replace an inadequate federally owned highway river crossing, first constructed over 60 years ago, with a new bridge that meets current roadway design criteria and improves both vehicle and truck capacity on U.S. 93 in the area of the Dam.
- Minimize the potential for pedestrian - vehicle accidents on the Dam crest and on the Nevada and Arizona approaches.
- Protect the Hoover Dam, visitors, employees, equipment, and power generation capabilities and Colorado River waters while enhancing the visitors' experience at Hoover Dam.

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The FHWA recommended the Sugarloaf alignment as the best location to construct the bridge. This location is approximately 1,500 feet downstream from Hoover Dam. This site requires constructing 2.2 miles of highway approach in Nevada and approximately 1.2 miles of highway approach in Arizona and a 2,000-foot long bridge.

Travel Times

The current travel time across the top of the Hoover Dam averages 16.5 minutes up to 60 minutes during peak hours. The proposed bypass bridge and approaches would reduce the travel time to only six minutes.

When accidents occur on and near the Dam, significant traffic backups of over ten to fifteen miles result. Since there are no alternative routes to which traffic can shift, this results in delays ranging from two to five hours for motorists. There have been incidents of up to 18 hours delay.

Accident Statistics

The number of tourists traveling to the Lake Mead Recreational Area and Hoover Dam was 1.03 million in 1997 and was projected to increase to 1.6 million in 1999. Since 1964 more than 500 accidents have occurred in the 3.4 mile stretch of highway on or near the Hoover Dam. Commercial trucks were involved in 96 of these accidents. Forty-three accidents between 1985 and 1991 involved one or more personal injuries, including two fatalities. In each accident, the cause was partially attributable to sharp curves, narrow highway widths, insufficient shoulder widths, poor sight distance and slow travel speeds. Especially in regards to freight traffic, the previous configuration of putting trucks across the Hoover Dam with two-lane

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traffic, steep approaches, sharp curves at the entrances and heavy pedestrian traffic, the Hoover Dam was a serious accident location.

One mile of the Hoover Dam road reflects a much higher accident rate than the three-mile adjoining segments. The half-mile segments of US 93 approaching the Dam have an accident rate of 3.97 per million vehicle miles traveled. That rate is over three times the Nevada average of 1.15 per million vehicle miles traveled for rural principal arterial routes.
Traffic on the road across the Hoover Dam was 5,500 vehicles per day in 1993 and currently is 11,500 vehicles per day. 18% to 20% was truck traffic prior to 9/11/01. Future traffic is projected to be 21,000 in 2017 and 26,000 in 2027. As the average annual daily traffic across the Dam continues to increase, the number of accidents is increasing accordingly as congestion on the Dam also increases.

Security

Since Hoover Dam holds the waters of Lake Mead, the largest water reservoir in the nation, the U.S. Department of Interior has identified the Hoover Dam Bypass Project as its number one national security priority. The massive Dam provides vital flood control for more than a quarter million people living in the Colorado River region and generates four billion kilowatt-hours of energy for 1.3 million people in the tri-state regions of California, Arizona and Nevada.

Project Status

- Hoover Dam Bypass Project received its record of decision for project approval in April 2001. The Environmental Impact Statement has been finalized.
- This project is the number one priority of the States of Arizona and Nevada. Only an

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additional $108 million is needed to ensure full funding for this project.

- The design is over 95% complete for the Arizona approach. Nevada's approach is 60% complete. The bridge design is 30% complete.

Funding

	Current
Nevada & Arizona state funds	$40,000,000
Federal Funds previously committed	$86,000,000
Additional Federal Funding needed	**$108,000,000**
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	$234,000,000

We are requesting $108 million to complete the Hoover Dam Bypass Project. Because there are no complex interchanges and only one small area of roadway on either side of the bridge to construct, we are confident that the bridge as designed will be completed within the entire project budget of $234 million dollars. The bridge's design ensures that it will accommodate anticipated traffic volumes including increased freight that will be generated due to the north-south trade from Mexico to Canada well into the future.

GARVEE Bonds/Innovative Financing

Because of the great need to construct the Hoover Dam Bypass, Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles (GARVEEs) are being considered as a mechanism to provide immediate funds to complete the construction of the Hoover Dam Bypass through the issuing of bonds. Even though bond financing

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incurs interest and other debt-related costs, delaying the project would create greater costs such as inflation, lost driver time, freight delays, and wasted fuel. Both Arizona and Nevada are interested in pursuing this as an option to allow construction to begin immediately, while allowing federal funding to occur over time. This allows for completion of the Hoover Dam Bypass by mid 2007 and thereby, providing a safe and efficient route for commercial trucking.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we urge you to consider providing an additional $108 million dollars to fully fund the Hoover Dam Bypass. The bypass project is vital to the efficient movement of commercial freight and will substantially reduce the additional miles and travel times that commercial trucks are currently experiencing. This project is also a critical part of the development of the CANAMEX Corridor which runs from Mexico to Canada and will provide economic growth and safer transportation by increasing commercial freight, commerce and tourism.

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